



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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REGULATIONS PROPOSED FOR EARLY MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING SEASONS; COMMENTS REQUESTED ON REGULATION OF CAPTIVE-REARED MALLARDS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing that the hunting of teal during special September seasons be allowed only after sunrise, except where states undertake studies on the impact of pre-sunrise hunting on non-target ducks.

Last year, states with early teal seasons were allowed to permit hunting to start one-half hour before sunrise.

The change is part of the Service's proposed regulations for the early migratory bird seasons. The regulations cover doves; woodcock; band-tailed pigeons; rails; snipe; common moorhens and purple gallinules; sandhill cranes; sea ducks; special September wood duck, teal, and Canada goose seasons; and migratory bird hunting seasons in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Overall, this year's proposed regulations are similar to the 1992 regulations. Other than the change in pre-sunrise hunting, the only significant new restriction deals with sea ducks.

Last year, hunters could harvest any combination of scoters, eiders, and oldsquaw within a 7-bird limit. Under the proposed regulations, hunters will only be able to have a maximum of 4 scoters in the 7-bird limit.

The Service is also proposing to expand September Canada goose hunting opportunities, including 3-year experimental seasons in Maryland, New Jersey, and Virginia.

Extended Canada goose season dates are proposed for Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Minnesota, Washington, Oregon, and southeast Pennsylvania. These seasons, requested by the states, are designed mainly to harvest resident Canada geese prior to the arrival of migratory Canada geese. A number of

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states are experiencing problems and conflicts caused by a rapid growth in the number of non-migratory Canada geese.

In addition, the Service proposes to eliminate permit requirements, enlarge bag limits, and extend the season length for Canada goose hunting in Washington and Oregon.

Specifics on these proposals and on the proposed early migratory bird hunting seasons were published in the July 13, 1993, Federal Register. Public comments are requested through July 22 and should be sent to the Chief (MBMO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop 634, Arlington, Virginia 22203.

COMMENTS SOUGHT ON CAPTIVE-BRED MALLARDS

In a separate action, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently issued a notice of intent to review regulations pertaining to the release and harvest of captive-bred mallards and invited public comment on the issue.

Currently, regulations allow for the release of captive-reared mallards provided they are properly marked. These birds may be harvested without a permit, in any number, and at any time within the confines of a state-licensed shooting preserve.

The Service has become concerned, however, that shooting preserves may be allowing captive-bred mallards free range over a wide area, raising the possibility that the birds could spread diseases such as avian cholera and duck plague to wild waterfowl populations. In addition, captive-bred mallards allowed free range may be serving as live decoys that can attract wild mallards. Federal hunting regulations prohibit use of live decoys.

The agency is also concerned the large numbers of captive-reared mallards may be affecting the Service's annual waterfowl population and harvest surveys in some areas. And there is a question whether captive-bred ducks could alter the genetic make-up of wild mallard populations in some areas, as well as lead to hybridization with other species such as black ducks.

The Service's Notice of Intent was published in the June 1, 1993, Federal Register. Public comments are requested through August 2, 1993, and should be sent to the Chief (MBMO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop 634, Arlington, Virginia 22203.